GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6993
ANSWERED ON:11.05.2005
DECLINING INTEREST IN STUDY OF SCIENCE
Prabhu Shri Suresh Prabhakar

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the declining interest of the students in the study of science;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government proposes to create initiatives and opportunities in the field of Science including Research and Development; and

(d) if so, the steps contemplated by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) Yes Sir, the Government is fully aware of the recent trend of meritorious students moving away from the basic science stream.

(b) The basic reasons are availability of alternative and lucrative employment opportunities in commerce, finance, engineering, Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), etc. The employment opportunities in higher education and R&D in basic sciences are not considered attractive enough by students and parents, given the long and painstaking training required before entering the employment arena in basic R&D.

(c) & (d): The Government has already instituted several schemes to attract, train and help retain students in basic science and basic research. The Children's Science Congress, the Integrated Science Olympiad Programme, the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana, the CSIR Programme on Youth for Leadership in Science are some of the attractive schemes for students from the school to the pre-doctoral stage. At the doctoral and post-doctoral levels, the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Fellowships, Swarnajayanti Fellowships, Better Opportunities for Young Scientist in Chosen Areas of Science and Technology (BOYSCAST) Fellowships, Biotechnology Fellowships, Fast Track projects etc. are in operation. The Women Scientists Scheme offers opportunities to women Scientists till 50 years of age for re-entry into mainstream science. Almost all scientific departments and agencies fund research projects to individual researchers in basic sciences. The newly launched Ramanna Fellowships will support outstanding researchers through flexible research grant irrespective of their age. The Government is constantly thinking about this challenge and responding to the needs in a dynamic fashion through innovative programmes.